

CONCEPT OF AHARA VIDHI VISHESHAYATAN (FOOD INTAKE) IN AYURVEDA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda defines health as balance of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*, as well as the physical, mental emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Health as well as diseases is dependent on various factors. *Ayurveda* places special emphasis on *Ahara* and believes that healthy nutrition nourishes the body, mind and soul. In *Ayurveda*, *Ahara*, as well as the method of its intake both have equal importance. As *Acharya* had described that *Ahara*, *Nidra* and *Brahmacharya* are *Triupstambha* (three sub pillars), which support the body itself. Here *Ahara* has been placed first, which shows that it is most important to maintain and sustain the life. In *Ayurveda* classics emphasis has been laid regarding

the right way to eating food. Nowadays, many lifestyle diseases are increasing day by day due to incorrect eating practices and cookery procedures. *Ayurveda* classics describe all these aspects in a very systematic scientific manner which is called as *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan*. These are eight aspects of food convention that includes compatibility of food articles which are determinant factors for the maintenance of health.

KEYWORDS: *Ahara*, *Vidhi*, *Visheshayatan*, *Ayurveda*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is the ancient science of life. It is the science which not only deals with the curative aspect of diseases but gives more importance to preventive aspect^[1] “Prevention is better than cure”. There is a close relationship between lifestyle of an individual and the state of health and disease.^[2] Lifestyle refers to someone’s way of living or we can say the dietary (*Ahara*) and behavioural (*Vihar*) choices of an individual that he/she usually practices in daily routine of life.

Ahara is the basic need of human being since, it plays important role in sustenance of life. *Ayurved* has given detail discipline and process to take the *Ahara* for an individual and a general both. This discipline is titled as *Ahara Vidhi*, where all the law about the diet and drinks are given.

Acharya Charaka has given a single lined *Sutra* regarding the *Vidhi* of diet, which contains a lot for a person who wishes to lead a healthy life. The person who wants to be free of different *Rogas* should eat *Hitakar Ahara* in appropriate amount on appropriate time.^[3] A wholesome diet requires a lot more than just having nutrients and our ancient *Ayurvedic* texts have laid an immense emphasis on all aspects of *Ahara and Ahara Vidhi*.

AIM

To study of *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan*.

OBJECTIVE

To understand *Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan* in *Ayurveda*.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

For this study *Ayurvedic* literature is collected from classical text of *Ayurveda*. Available in Central and Departmental Library of Government *Ayurvedic* College, Nanded and related websites also surfed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatan (Eight aspects of Dietetics)

Eight types of direction for ingestion of food are given they are^[4]

1. *Prakrti*
2. *Karana*
3. *Samyoga*

4. *Rashi*
5. *Desha*
6. *Kala*
7. *Upyoga- sansatha*
8. *Upyokta.*

1. **Prakrti (Natural Quality of food)**^[5]

Prakrti is first factor. *Prakriti* is a *swabhava*, or the natural attribute or trait of a substance which is inherited naturally; it is real effect of eatables. Original qualities of food and medicines are expected here in terms of heaviness (digest slowly) etc like- Black gram is heavy to digest whereas green gram is light to digest.

2. **Karana (Processing of food)**^[6]

Karana is second factor. *Karana* is also known as *Sanskara*. This means transformation of qualities through various processes like cooking, frying, roasting etc. Due to this the quality or *Guna* gets changed. By roasting and steaming the food becomes light, whereas frying makes it heavy. This can be explained in short as- raw rice is heavier than roasted rice. Curd provokes *Kapha Dosha* but the same curd when converted into butter milk is good for health.

3. **Samyoga (Combination of food substances)**^[7]

Samyoga is third factor. *Samyoga* means combination or mixing of two or more substances. When more than two substances are mixed together (food or medicines), the quality of the combination will be totally different from the individual components. The qualities which were not present in the individual component or substances are induced in the combination.

Sometimes the combination may be extremely beneficial, sometimes it may be dangerous. Therefore it is important that one thoroughly knows about the individual food substances and also should have knowledge of what qualities are inherited when different food substances are combined. For example, Fish is good for health. Milk is good for health. Both are good for health if consumed separately. If they are eaten in combination, it is worst for health, as this combination acts like poison in body and is responsible for generation of many diseases. Another example is honey and ghee when mixed in equal proportions or when fish is taken along with milk will prove lethal and are dangerous for health.

4. *Rashi* (Quantity of food)^[8]

Rashi means quantity of food. Quantity of intake of food is very important for health and should essentially be taken into consideration. There is a particular fixed quantity of food which needs to be consumed and that shall not be breached at any cost. The quantum of food for every individual is different and is fixed for that particular individual. More than the desired and permissible quantity or less than that, both are not good for health. Ideal food, both are not good for health.

There are two type of *Rashi*^[9]

Sarvagraha Rashi^[9]-In this, the quantity of the food is taken in it's totally (entirely) i.e. all the substances, ingredients and collusions of the food to served will be considered in totality.

Parigraha Rashi^[9]- In this, the quantity of each of the ingredients or portions of the food is considered separately.

This also depends on one's capacity and choices .For example, if there are 8 food items served on a table, consuming all them is called *Sarvagraha*. One can chose 3-4 portions or types of items as per his choice and few can take only on item in excess. This is called *Parigraha*. This depends on their choices and capacity to eat. These factors are individual and not universal. But ultimately understanding the *Rashi* which is suitable to self is the key for good health. The *Rashi* should be filling to one's capacity and essential energy needed for life processes.

5. *Desha* (Habitat/ place where the food is grown or cultivated)^[10]

Desha is fifth factor, it denotes place of origin of food stuff whether it is offspring of cool country or warm country; it also denotes body, which consumes it. It means habit of body to eat certain type of food is observed here.

6. *Kala* (Time /Time of consumption of food)^[11]

Kala is sixth factor. It denotes condition of body, whether the consumer is in healthy condition or he is s.

Nityaga and *Avasthika* are two types of *Kala*

Nityaga: is one in which *Ahara* is consumed according to *Rutusatmya*. For example: During rainy season, aggravation of *Vata* occurs due to cold climate, Hence *Vatashamaka* sweet,

sour, and salty food and drinks are preferred. During summer, the Sun with his rays, draws up excessively the moisture of the nature. Hence in that season Sweet, cold, liquid food and drinks are beneficial.

Avasthika: Intake of *Ahara* according to condition of body either Healthy or diseased. For example, *Langhana* is advised in *Atisara*, Spicy food should be avoided in Jaundice. *Ayurveda* also explains the Ideal time for food intake i.e., only when the previously taken food is completely digested.

7. *Upyoga- Sansatha (Dietetic Rules / Rules for consuming food)*^[12]

It simply means the dietetic rules. It contains everything related to Diet, how to eat, when to eat, what to eat.

8. *Upyokta (The User / The person who consumes food)*^[13]

Finally comes the *Upyokta*. That is the one who uses the *Ahardravyas*. Every person must take into consideration his own constitution, capacity of digestive power, the season, time of day and whether the previously taken food has been digested or not. He is the one who must take in to consideration all this facts of *Ahara* and consume food accordingly.

SEQUENCE OF FOOD INTAKE

Guru, Madhur and *Snighdha* food should be taken initially during the course of a meal followed by *Amla, Lavana* ahara. Food which is *Ruksha, Katu, Tikta* and *Kashaya* should be taken in the last part of the meal for proper activation of *Agni*, proper absorption and assimilation of food. After taking food, it is advised to take rest for *Mahurta Matra* (48 min)^[14] for proper digestion.

DISCUSSION

Ahara being a part of daily routine, if one concentrate a little more on dietetic rules along with quality, quantity and mode of intake then overall effect on health can be enhanced. Nowadays, we are neglecting the digestive capacity, nutritional value of food products, and time sense of food intake and are more interested in eating tasty, ready to eat food materials. In this context, concept of *Ashta Aharavidhi visheshayatane* is most ideal in today's lifestyle. The concept of *Prakruti & Karan (Samskara)* helps in this aspect, to bring about the new, desirable and adaptable properties in food material. By analysing the *Prakruti* of food material; desirable combinations (*Samyog*) can be made to omit the undesirable or harmful

effects of the food material. The concept of *Rashi* as explained above states that food taken in proper quantity gets digested comfortably and promotes the life span. The Concept of *Desha* explains that we must essentially know about the origin as well as properties of food material as the soil has its own effect on the crop. Hence, the selection of food material can be done which is suitable to one's body constitution. The involvement of *Kala* is on each & every state of Ahara dravyas as well as at all stages of Ahara consumption. Hence, for achieving maximum benefits of consumed Ahara; the *Kala* is to be considered as an important factor. *Upyogsamstha* are the Code & Conducts for taking diet should be followed in today's lifestyle. By considering all above said regulations of food consumption; *Upyokta* i.e., a wise person should understand the good & bad outcome of right or wrong eating.

CONCLUSION

These conditions play a major role in selection and intake of our food, helps us know about the wholesomeness of food and also the foods we need to take, the quantity, quality and combination of different foods, the place and time related to food and the rules to be followed while consuming foods. There it becomes very important for everyone to know these conditions thoroughly. *Ayurveda* deals with both *Swasthyarakshana* and *Vyadhiparimoksha*. The adaptation of the concept of *Ashta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatanas* will be helpful in fulfillment of both these *Prayojanas*.

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